

VZCZCXRO2342
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHRY #0851/01 2061727
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 251727Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1432
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE//POLAD/J2//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 CONAKRY 000851

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

TREASURY FOR OFFICE OF AFRICAN NATIONS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/25/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [GV](#)
SUBJECT: GUINEA: UPDATE AND REFLECTIONS

REF: A. CONAKRY 710

[1](#)B. CONAKRY 593

Classified By: Charge David H. Kaeuper. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Information and impressions gathered during recent meetings and contacts with the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, union leaders, women's groups and others reinforce the Embassy's earlier reporting and analyses (septel). Badly exposed by the union's July 3 open letter attacking him, Prime Minister Kouyate finds himself in the difficult position of being unable to fulfill the provisions of the January 27 political agreement he was constitutionally delegated by President Conte to fulfill. The fact is that Kouyate and his government have neither the resources nor authority to succeed should the President chose not to back them, which apparently is the case as Presidential clans chip away at the gains of January 27. While Guineans fear "chaos" and cling to the idea that, in extremis, the military will step in to guarantee the transition, this is no longer a viable option given the military's fragile structure and possibility of fragmenting. The bottom line is that Guinea is adrift in strong currents of change without a reliable compass or helmsman. With not much to work with, free and fair national assembly elections probably offer the best way forward. End Summary.

Recent meetings

[1](#)2. (C) During the Charge's July 13 courtesy call, Prime Minister Kouyate came across as relaxed and fairly sure of himself in the wake of a scathing attack by the unions on his administration in an open letter dated July 3. Kouyate told Charge that he had subsequently met with union leaders whom he understood were divided among themselves, answered each of their complaints point by point and said they appeared to be satisfied. They had agreed on regular consultations in the future (comment: union reps and civil society members are joining the government delegation led by the Minister of Economy and Finance at the Paris Forum). Kouyate had appealed for patience and understanding -- things couldn't be improved immediately after years of neglect. Kouyate said that as part of reaching out and explaining the government's position, he would be visiting population centers in the forest region in tandem with hosting the Makona River summit, July 17, in Gueckedou (comment: Kouyate did make four stops).

[1](#)3. (C) Asked about the military, Kouyate said the aging, titular leadership was split off from the troops with other cleavages apparent but unclear. Asked about charges that he was "the President's man," Kouyate said that he was for democracy, the President was against it, and this put them at

odds. Kouyate said he had turned down earlier requests by Conte to return to Guinea and take over the government, but had refused because Guinean's earlier hadn't proved themselves worthy of his undertaking this effort. Now that Guineans had shown themselves ready to die for political change and democracy, he had reconsidered. Kouyate acknowledged, however, that he must tread carefully as his authority is linked to the President's decree, based on Article 39 of the Constitution. As Kouyate's protocol chief, with the IMF team in tow, ended the meeting, Kouyate said the US could help him by providing PL-480 rice (Kouyate has approached the embassy again with this request).

¶4. (C) The Prime Minister's concerns resurfaced in the Charge's July 16 meeting with Foreign Minister Abdoul Kabele Camara. Asked about growing political tensions, Camara saw a Kouyate administration beset from all sides: by the President's people; by the "former" civilian political leadership/PUP; by ranking officials in the ministries and administrative services; and by the unions and some political parties. Camara bemoaned the government's lack of resources to respond to the demands of a civil society which is impatient and increasingly less tolerant. Asked about the legal underpinnings of the government's authority, Camara, a noted lawyer and former President of Guinea's bar association, confirmed that it is derived through the Constitution's Article 39 and the President's decree appointing Kouyate. Asked about the government's legitimacy relative to the January 27 accords, Camara agreed that unions, civil society, and many political parties see this as undermining the authority of the Kouyate government. They had a point, Camara said, but he saw no way to reconcile the two points of view except through "politics." The people have to show patience and restraint as the government seeks the resources to improve their lot and move forward. The

CONAKRY 00000851 002 OF 004

government is on a tight rope with the only way out free and fair National Assembly elections that would allow the necessary revisions to the constitution, and good governance to take hold. He warmly complimented US/G-8 support for the Government and Guinea's democratic forces. Asked about the ban on agricultural exports to neighboring countries, Camara allowed that it violated regional agreements on the free flow of goods and people and that several governments had protested. The policy was necessary, however, to try to make foodstuffs and building materials more available and less expensive in Guinea (prices came down somewhat but are floating upward again).

¶5. (C) Similar issues and concerns emerged from an informative meeting with officials of four leading unions on July 17 who had issued the July 3 open letter attacking Prime Minister Kouyate and the government (reported septel). Union leaders highlighted what they called a very uncertain and unpredictable situation, but emphasized they had to stick together to counter efforts by the Presidency/clans to divide them and roll back the political gains earlier in the year. They believed the legitimacy and authority of the Kouyate government was tied to January 27 accords, but also recognized the difficulties union pressures were creating for the Prime Minister. Having issued the July 3 letter attacking the government, the union leaders seemed to be coming around to a point of view that their fate and success was linked to the government's success, and that any new pressure had to be carefully measured. When asked to consider the abrupt departure of President Conte, opinion divided. Several said the only way to avoid "chaos" was strict adherence to constitutional provisions for succession, while others disparaged this as totally inadequate unless free and fair elections produced a legitimate National Assembly reflecting the peoples' will. The instinctive reaction, however, seemed to be that the military would have to intervene to save Guinea from chaos.

Where things stand

¶6. (C) From the Government, unions and democratic forces in civil society, it is clear that there is considerable uncertainty and serious concern over what is in store for Guinea. On the plus side, the unions are beginning to analyze the political situation and the unions' options in a more mature and reflective way following their July 3 attack on the Prime Minister. Having let things drift too long, the government seems now to be responding appropriately, reopening dialogue with the unions, moving government administration back into the field (though there are complaints that too many former government officials are included), reaching out to IFIs and traditional donors for support, trying to hold down prices (albeit artificially), and doing what little is possible to improve services (80 new transformers are being installed, though this is unlikely to help much in the short term). Political tensions so palpable during the past couple of weeks seem to have subsided somewhat.

¶7. (C) Hurdles to a peaceful, democratic transition, however, remain substantial. What is visible are political parties being paid to rejoin the PUP (majority party) fold; reputed attempts to divide the unions; the difficulty the Prime Minister seems to be having replacing discredited officials with capable people and asserting control over the Central Bank, over foreign exchange earnings, and over the appointment of prefects and governors; and discredited favorites reimposing themselves on the public (Mamadou Syla, for example). Less apparent is whether this is part of a planned, Presidential strategy to roll back popular and democratic gains earlier in the year, old regime insiders struggling to hold on, organized clans operating under Conte's protection, or an unholy brew of all the above. Whether Conte is any longer a credible, rational interlocutor is itself an important question. If he is not, this could pose a serious problem during any resurgent crisis.

Some themes/issues the Embassy is following

¶8. (C) Does Kouyate belong to the people (January 27 accords) or is he President Conte's man? A reasonable Guinean could conclude that Kouyate is the President's man. Kouyate is linked to Conte through his mother who is from Conte's natal village. Kouyate emphasizes the fact that his authority is derived from Conte's decree appointing him Prime Minister and head of government. Kouyate's failure so far to implement key elements of the January 27 accords, such as control over Guinea's foreign exchange earnings and appointments to government positions, raises questions and

CONAKRY 00000851 003 OF 004

undermines faith in his government. Our view is that Kouyate is a pragmatic politician and operator who sees his scope for action tied to real forces in play. Caught in the middle, he knows he's between the anvil and hammer and doing the best he can under the circumstances. Kouyate's long years abroad, while raising questions about his political base in Guinea, are probably a plus as he has independent status as a respected international diplomat and as a personal friend to African heads and former heads of state, both factors that might afford him some protection.

¶9. (C) Guinea's masses. Guinea's illiterates are a prime source of uncertainty and potential instability. Both government ministers and the unions have scored illiteracy, said to range as high as 70-80 percent, as a serious problem in keeping the population informed on their issues, and at peace. Radio is said to be the only effective tool available to reach the population whether in Conakry or in the interior. Because Union leaders are uncertain of their ability to control a strike and because they suspect a strike would lead to pillaging, they are less willing to strike, though striking is the only effective tool employed, so far, for forcing positive changes. Lower prices and higher wages probably would satisfy the "masses", leaving unions, civil

society and political parties high and dry on constitutional, political, and administrative reforms.

¶10. (C) The Military. The military is Guinea's most privileged institution whose aged, titular leadership is divorced from the troops. Even in the middle ranks there doesn't appear to be any clear unity of command except for the U.S. and Chinese trained units which are kept out of Conakry on Guinea's frontiers. The Presidential Guard, the Red Berets, can protect the president but likely would be unable to control another general public uprising. Should members of the military attempt a political takeover, betting is that the military would break apart and possibly coalesce along generational or ethnic lines. Should the military be deployed to restore order, it would likely provoke more violence and possibly fragment.

¶11. (C) Fear. Popular "fear" is widespread in the aftermath of violence of January and February, fear of more violence and a descent into chaos. At one end of the spectrum, fear seems to be leading to soft pedaling or inaction on pushing through the administrative changes that are necessary to good governance. On the other, it chances individuals or institutions, such as the military or President's family, acting precipitously to preserve their perks in the face of successful challenges such as the January 27 accords. With the decline of the military, and with Conte receding or no longer available as a rational interlocutor, Guinea's only fall-back or self-correcting mechanism is mainly the fear of falling victim to the chaos that befell its neighbors.

¶12. (C) Ethnicity matters. That the discussion of ethnic issues is no longer seen as taboo is positive in so far as it helps Guineans to manage the ethnic question successfully. The fact is that ethnicity has long been considered in political and administrative decisions. The recent naming of governors and prefects was largely along ethnic lines. Many of the of the new political parties are largely ethnic. We are also learning that ethnic antagonisms abound in Conakry's multi-ethnic neighborhoods as reported by women during a recent debrief on a USAID democracy education program. A breakdown in public order would likely reinforce ethnic politics and violence.

¶13. (C) When Conte dies, all bets are off. Constitutional succession is a possibility though anti-PUP popular opinion is that free and fair elections would be impossible, and therefore unacceptable, with the current National Assembly still seated. So, constitutional succession is suspect at the outset. The likely outcome of an attempted military takeover has been treated above.

Suggestions for consideration (some already in the Embassy's work plan)

-- Further brighten the international spotlight on National Assembly elections with a line of high profile international visitors to keep the requirement for free and fair elections front and center in the public's eye.

-- Work with national assembly deputies and political party leaders to outline a dynamic, institutional role for the opposition, and to highlight the value to losers of "alternance."

CONAKRY 00000851 004 OF 004

-- Promote continued national debate and dialogue on transition issues

-- Enhance/script coordination among the G-8 and others to increase pressure on the Presidency and National Assembly deputies on free and fair national assembly elections.

-- Bring in US trade unionists for talks/publicity/support

for the unions and Guinea's other democratic forces.

-- Increase support for Guinea's independent radio stations with these and other democracy themes and programming.

KAEUPER